



The Patriot Reader Newsletter

P.O. Box 2117

St. Augustine, FL 32085

Bill Dudley, Publisher

Michael Rothfeld, Editor

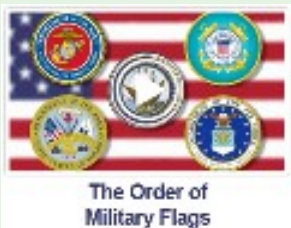
Volume 9, Issue 5

Message from the Chairman

May 2020

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Fellow Veterans:
I hope everyone is following the Governor's orders to "shelter in place". I know this is a very challenging time and for us that are high action types that are in perpetual motion, it has been a very anxious couple of weeks. However, for the good of our health and that of our family and friends, it is a necessary condition we will have to endure for a while longer.

Even while the shelter in place order is in effect, your Veterans Council has been very busy. We have assisted with getting a Vietnam Purple Heart veteran a new HVAC system for his home thanks to the generosity of Mr. Doug Wiles and Sheriff David Shoar, each footing 50% of the costs of a new system. Also, a big shout out to Mr. Steve Chapman at Chapman's All American Air for significantly reducing the cost. The Veterans Council, working with St. Johns Housing Authority was instrumental in helping another veteran with some much needed repairs on his home, and the same with another 84 year old veteran who required some much needed work to make his

house more livable and safety proofed. A big shout out to Chief Rob Hardwick and his team at SABPD for their assistance.

Our Veterans Treatment Court has had to stand down during this COVID-19 order from the Governor essentially shutting down all non-essential businesses and government functions. However, the VTC Team held a virtual team meeting last Thurs. and a decision was made by Judge Howard McGillin to conduct a virtual court session on 30 April. This may become a reality for the foreseeable future until an order is received lifting the stand down order.

I want to highly stress to all our veterans and others in the community, if you haven't yet filled out your 2020 U.S. Census questionnaire, to please take the time to do so while you are under a shelter in place order and you have the time to do so. It is extremely important. It takes less than 10 minutes to complete the very simple questionnaire. Our County is currently at 57%. Our 2010 results were 79%. That means 21% of our County did not respond in 2010. The County loses \$1445 per person over a 10 year period for each citizen not counted. Our County population is cur-



rently around 235000. So do the math: 21% of 235000 x \$1445 x 10 year. That is a huge revenue loss to the County that could be used for schools, veterans health care, infrastructure, and many other needs of the county not to mention the representation for our elected representatives from our district in Washington. We have approximately 23000 veterans in St. Johns County. I would like to see a 100% response from our veteran community.

If you have any questions about the questionnaire, don't hesitate to either contact me or Nadine Meinhardt, U.S. Census Bureau, Nadine.meinhardt@2020census.gov, Tel.484-919-1914. You will find a US Census flyer in this month's newsletter giving more details.

Bill Dudley
Chairman
Veterans Council of St. Johns County

Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans Nursing Home



The residents at Clyde E Lassen State Veterans’ Nursing Home are still going strong! Unable to receive visitors and no volunteers permitted in the building, but we’re still participating in activities and communicating with families! We are using mobile computers to teleconference with families, even celebrating birthdays in this way.

Mr John Franks virtually celebrated his 95th birthday with his family using the mobile computer. Definitely a birthday to remember!

Girl Scout Cookies



Each Wednesday we have mobile parties with a different “treat” theme... we’ve had pizza

Cotton Candy



We also have had a few new “visitors” to keep everyone’s spirits up...





**The Jacksonville National Cemetery
Greetings from the Support
Committee at the Jacksonville
National Cemetery**



The Support Committee invites everyone to attend its **next scheduled meeting**. The meeting will be at **6:00pm**. The meeting will take place at Community Hospice, **4266 Sunbeam Rd., Jacksonville, FL 32257 in Conference Room A.**

**Jacksonville National Cemetery Support Committee Meetings for 2018
At Community Hospice of NE FL.
4266 Sunbeam Rd, Jacksonville, FL 32257
Hadlow Bldg – Conference Room A 6:00pm**

**DATES OF 2020 SC at JNC MEETINGS, All on Mondays
May 4th, Oct 5th, Nov 2nd, Dec 7th**

**MEMORIAL DAY EVENT - Saturday, May 23rd
WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA 2020 - Saturday, December 19th.**

+++++2018/19,20 Officers of the SCJNC+++++

**Chairman: Steve Spickelmier
Vice Chairman: Bill Dudley, Treasurer: Pat Welch
Secretary: Kathy Church, Judge Advocate: Don Guthrie
Master-At-Arms: Mike Smith, Historian: Win Delpizzo
Chaplain: Mike Delpizzo, Public Affairs: Pat Mulvihill**

The Veterans Council of St. Johns County meets on the following dates, all are invited to attend. We meet at the county Health & Human Services building, 200 San Sebastian View, at 7 pm

Future meeting Speakers:

- May 28 Dr. Roger Smith, Military History of Colonial St. Augustine**
- June 25 SJC Homeless Veterans Initiative panel (tentative)**
- July 30 Fire Watch speaker (tentative)**
- Sept. 24 Denise Olsen, Finding & Honoring your Military Ancestry**



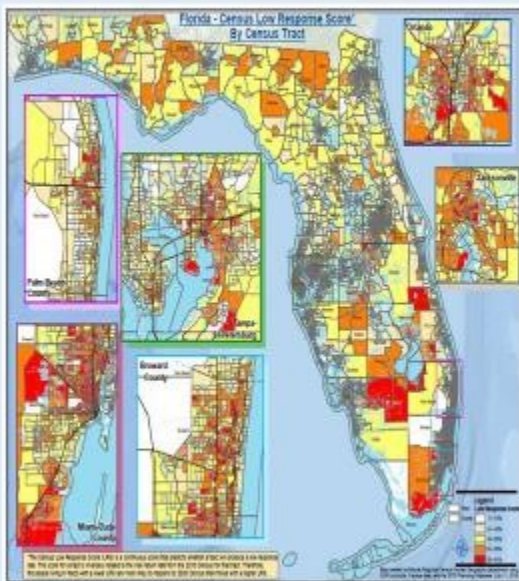
A head count is conducted every 10 years since 1790, as required by the U.S. Constitution.

- A Census count is constitutionally mandated for re-apportionment of Congress.
- Census results are used for Redistricting at national, state, and local levels.
- After 2010, FL gained 2 congressional seats.
- Over \$675 Billion/year is distributed to state and local governments using Census numbers (Over \$4 Trillion over the decade).
- Census data guide decision making on all levels of government and will determine the need for future government services over the next decade.

NEW INITIATIVES DESIGNED TO INCREASE ACCURATE, SELF-RESPONSE

Allowing people to respond anytime, anywhere, via phone or internet. Tests have shown internet self-response is the most cost effective and accurate way.

Reengineering Field Operations- The Census Bureau is eliminating paper and incorporating the use of handheld data collection devices.



- In 2010, 74 percent of households in the United States filled out and mailed back their 2010 Census questionnaires- **74 percent in FL** mailed back theirs.
- In 2010, 19 counties in FL had Mail Response Rates that were lower than 70 percent.
- The Census provides Low Response Scores by Census Tracts. This score is a tract's predicted **nonresponse rate**.
- The map of Low Response Scores allows us to identify areas likely to need additional targeted outreach and field follow-up.

- One way to ensure success and an accurate Count in the 2020 Census is by forming a Complete Count Committee (CCC).
- Local governments, businesses and community leaders form CCC's to encourage participation in their community. They develop an outreach plan tailored to the unique characteristics of their community. Then they work together to implement the plan.
- Form or join a CCC in your area and help us spread the word about Census jobs and our jobs website- <https://2020census.gov/jobs>

Contact the Census at Atlanta Partnership Staff 470-889-6530, atlanta.rcc.partnership@census.gov to schedule a CCC Workshop today.

For Job information, contact Recruiting at Atlanta Recruiting 1-855-889-8932

North Florida/ South Georgia Veterans Health System

Dear Veteran,

As of March 18, the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System does not have any patients confirmed positive with the Coronavirus (COVID-19). We have had several patients whom we have sent their specimen sample off for testing. As of today, our designated COVID-19 testing lab has returned negative results for presence of the virus.

As the number of confirmed cases continue to rise throughout our nation and locally, we are all taking significant actions in our workplaces, at home and in our community to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Our top priority is the safety and care of our Veteran patients and employees. Our objective is slowing the spread of the disease. There are several actions we have taken to assist with meeting this objective:

We implemented the COVID-19 telephone support line for patients enrolled in VISN 8. The VISN Clinical Contact Center, 1-877-741-3400, is available 24/7 to support identification of COVID-19 patients that need to stay home, be evaluated by telehealth or visit a hospital.

We limited access points and implemented active screenings at our clinical care delivery locations. We are following the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations for these screenings.

We restricted admissions and visits to the most vulnerable patient populations, our Nursing Homes. Visitation is still occurring within our hospice.

We placed the Disabled American Veteran (DAV) patient transportation system on hold.

We engaged with National, State and Community organizations to learn and coordinate our responses to this pandemic.

Over the next couple of days, we will continue to strengthen our initiatives to keep patients and employees who have COVID-19 symptoms out of the facilities, unless inpatient hospitalization is required. In effort to do this we will clinically review routine clinical screenings, elective surgeries and routine appointments that can be deferred until the pandemic has passed.

All face-to-face clinical outpatient appointments will be clinically reviewed to determine the feasibility to utilize telehealth modalities to include telephone, VA Video Connect, and MyHealthVet. Our care management teams will contact patients to communicate their personalized care plan and address any concern they might have related to the change. All plans will include consistent communication between the patient and the care team to address clinical needs and provide updates. We asked that for services that are direct scheduled (physical therapy, optometry, etc.) or a part of a walk-in clinics, that Veterans call before reporting to these appointments. We have further restricted our visitation policy that limits one visitor with a patient, if applicable.

I encourage our patients and staff to take every day preventative actions to avoid being exposed to the virus:

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.

Stay home if you are sick or becoming sick.

Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

If you have symptoms or have been exposed to someone with symptoms, call the VA before going to the facility.

Our team at NF/SGVHS is prepared for the long haul. I take comfort in knowing that our health system has dynamic, professional, and responsive staff who take pride in taking care of our patients.

One behalf of our Leadership team and employees, I thank you for entrusting us with your health care.

Thomas Wisnieski, MPA, FACHE, Director, North Florida/ South Georgia Veterans Health System

Sign-up for automatic email updates by filling in your email address in the "Emergency Email Updates" section, located at the top right corner of our page. Also, for information on emergencies, and various Veteran related events/topics "like" the NF/SGVHS Facebook Page.



Patriot Reader Reminders by John Mountcastle

IRS Filings

The following is accurate as of publication date, but check IRS.GOV website for current information.

The IRS has extended the original filing due date for personal income tax returns (and some other entities' returns which have fiscal years resulting in their filing due date) from April 15 to July 15. This includes:

- Quarterly Payroll tax returns are due April 30 and thirty days after each calendar quarter, but allows deferral of the EMPLOYER portion (one-half of Social Security Tax) until 12/31/20, then payment of the amounts deferred may be made ratably over the following two years.

On April 14, 2020, the IRS announced the following additional relief for taxpayers having filing or payment obligations occurring on or after April 1, 2020 and before July 15, 2020:

- Form 990 Series Annual Information Returns and/or Notices (including Forms 990, 990-EZ, 990-PF, 990-BL, 990-T and 990-N postcard returns)
 - * Forms 8871 and 8872
 - * Form 5227
 - * Form 1120-POL
 - * Form 4720
 - * Form 8976

Florida Registrations for Exempt Organizations

The Corporate Annual Report deadline has been pushed back from May 1, 2020 to June 30, 2020. This applies both to For Profit and Not For Profit corporations. For Profit corporations failing to meet this deadline may be subject to a \$400 Late Filing Penalty. There is no penalty for late filing by Not For Profit corporations.

Penalties for late filing of renewal registrations under the Florida Solicitation of Contributions Act have been suspended; this suspension expires April 19, 2020 unless further extended (note: renewals are staggered, based upon original registration date).

Florida Sales Tax

Quarterly sales tax deadline for the first quarter (January to March) extended to April 30, 2020 (deadline for electronic payment 5 PM on April 29) if the enterprise is an adversely affected taxpayer (i.e., meets one or more of the following):

- The business closed in compliance with a state or local government order and had no taxable sales transactions as a result; or

- The business experienced sales tax collections in March 2020 that are less than 75% of March 2019 sales tax collections; or
- The business was established after March 2019; or
- The business is registered with the Department to file quarterly.

The Federal Families First CoronaVirus Response Act

Employers should seek competent advice about additional paid sick leave subsidies available. Employees and many independent contractors/self-employed may be eligible to apply for unemployment and should review options at www.connect.myflorida.com.

Potential pitfall for those laid off and starting Florida Unemployment Claims

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES) and Family First Act increase unemployment benefits from 50% of the laid-off employee's historical compensation by an additional \$600 per week (for only four months) plus, for those states that opt in, eliminate the first week's deductible.

However, most states' unemployment (or "re-employment") websites default to a ten percent (10%) federal income tax withholding, and many allow zero percent (NO) federal withholding.

As this is tax time, those who have filed can easily determine their marginal tax rate (the highest rate on the last dollars earned). For most who earn more than the standard deduction (\$12,400 per taxpayer for 2020, as the Internal Revenue Code now stands), the cumulative effective rate shown on their 2019 tax return would be lower than the marginal rate (rate on that highest dollar of taxable income).

Marginal rates start from dollar one of taxable income, and increase. Taxable income is the following list (next page) features single and head-of-household first, with married filing jointly in parentheses:

- \$0 to \$9,875 (\$19,750) at 10%
- \$9,875 (\$19,750) to \$40,125 (\$80,250) at 12%
- \$40,125 (\$80,250) to \$85,525 (\$171,050) at 22%
- \$85,525 (\$171,050) to \$163,300 (\$326,600) at 24%
- \$163,300 (\$326,600) to \$207,350 (\$414,700) at 32%
- \$207,350 (\$414,700) to \$518,400 (\$622,050) at 35%
- Above \$207,350 (\$414,700) at 37%

While these are tense times now, digging an additional financial hole next April 15 could only make things worse. Those who regrettably should file for unemployment should be aware of this potential pitfall.

Economic Income Payments

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES) Economic Income Payment grant to individuals and couples (\$1,200/\$2,400 per family, plus \$500 for each dependent child) is not subject to federal income tax. These transfer payments (which are not considered taxable income, but are treated as a refundable advance income tax credit) will be distributed in the second half of April automatically to those who filed federal income tax returns in 2018 or 2019, and some others who were not required to file federal income tax returns. If the IRS or Social Security Administration has your direct deposit information, funds will be automatically deposited in your bank account; otherwise, a check will be issued unless you provide your direct deposit information at the IRS.gov website; look for “Get My Payment”. This website not only provides information with the status of your payment, including the date your payment is scheduled to be deposited into their bank account or mailed to you, but also allows eligible people a chance to provide your bank account information so you can receive your payment more quickly rather than waiting for a paper check. This feature will be unavailable if your Economic Impact Payment has already been scheduled for delivery.

DO NOT GIVE OUT INFORMATION SUCH AS SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS OR BANK ACCOUNT NUMBERS IN RESPONSE TO A PHONE CALL OR E-MAIL—THESE ARE NOT FROM THE GOVERNMENT AND YOU CAN LOSE MONEY!

Non-Filers should use IRS’ Enter Payment Info tool

For those who don’t normally file a tax return, the process is simple and only takes a few minutes to complete. First, visit IRS.gov, and look for “Non-Filers: Enter Payment Info Here.” Then provide basic information including Social Security number, name, address, and dependents. The IRS will use this information to confirm eligibility and calculate and send an Economic Impact Payment. Using the tool to get your payment will not result in any taxes being owed. Entering bank or financial account information will allow the IRS to deposit your payment directly in your account. Otherwise, your payment will be mailed to you.

Veterans beneficiaries and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients: The IRS continues to explore ways to see if Economic Impact Payments can be made automatically to SSI recipients and those who receive Veterans’ disability compensation, pension or survivor benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs and who did not file a tax return for the 2018 or 2019 tax years. People in these groups can either use Non-Filers: Enter Payment Info option now or wait as the IRS continues to review automatic payment options to simplify delivery for these groups.

“Non-Filers: Enter Payment Info” is secure, and the information entered will be safe. The tool is based on Free File Fillable Forms, part of the Free File Alliance’s offerings of free products on IRS.gov. If you must use a publicly-available computer to enter this information, be sure to close the browser, or even better yet, reboot the computer so your information is protected.

Individual Retirement Accounts

Required Minimum Distributions

For 2020, the required minimum distribution (which requires people who turned age 70 1/2 in 2019 to include a portion of their IRA or other defined contribution retirement account in their income) is waived. If you have already taken your 2020 RMD, see the next article. You may wish to repay your RMD.

Other Distributions from IRA's

The 10% extra tax on early withdrawals from IRAs and qualified retirement plans shall not apply to distributions of up to \$100,000 related to coronavirus:

- These are distributions made in 2020 to an individual diagnosed with COVID-19 or whose spouse or dependent is diagnosed or who experiences adverse financial consequences as a result of being quarantined, furloughed, or laid off due to such virus or is unable to work due to lack of child care or closing or reduced hours of his or her own business.
- Such amounts can be repaid to the retirement plan over a 3-year period;
- If not repaid, the regular tax on the distribution can be paid over a three-year period;
- Certain coronavirus-related loans up to \$100,000 from defined contribution plans are not treated as distributions and the repayment of such loans is extended.

Allowance of Partial Deduction for Charitable Contributions from 2020 Federal Income Tax

For 2020, charitable contributions of up to \$300 are deductible for those who do not itemize deductions. These must be cash contributions to charities (but not to private foundations or donor advised funds).

Modification of Limitations on Charitable Contributions During 2020

The 60% of AGI limit for cash contributions is increased to 100% for charitable cash donations made in 2020. For corporations, the 10% of taxable income limitation is increased to 25%. For donations of food inventory, the limitation increases from 15% to 25%.

#GivingTuesdayNow

Tuesday, May 5, many charities will participate in a concerted fundraiser under the hashtag above. Some folks may wish to contribute to their favorite public charity, but please be aware that there will probably be many unscrupulous attempts to get you to make a donation to a fraudulent organization. Not only will your hard-earned contribution be diverted from a legitimate public charity, but your contribution information may be used for other illegal purposes.

If in doubt about a charity, verify the legitimacy at one of the following websites:

- <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/tax-exempt-organization-search>
- <https://csapp.800helpfla.com/CSPublicApp/CheckACharity/CheckACharity.aspx>
- <https://www.guidestar.org/search>
- <https://www.charitynavigator.org/>

Information above current as of Noon, April 16, 2020.

From Michael Isam

Wow!

New VA clinic site is moving along!



Pictures of the new CBOC clearing on SR 207

By Michael Isam



Just wanted to let everyone know we have a new Chapter of Honor Flights here in NE Florida called **First Coast Honor Flights** with our first trip planned on October 17th leaving at 0800 and returning at 2035 from Jacksonville International Airport.

We will have people there in the morning sending them off and people there in the evening welcoming them back! A one day trip to DC!

If you are a WWII, Korean, Vietnam Veteran and would love to go to DC on a tour of our Monuments please go to our FB Page or Website for an application to go. We will select 25 Veterans from all the applications sent in. There will also be 25 Guardians to go on the flight to be with each Veteran, cost for Guardians is \$400.

We will also accept donations for the whole Program too if you feel compelled and care to help these Veterans in going!

We are also looking for 25 wheelchairs donated to FCHF, in working condition please of course. We already have one, so 24 needed!

We are also looking for someone who lives in St Johns or Duval County who would like to be the Treasurer, who has bookkeeping/financial/accounting experience or who is very good with numbers.

Here is the website: <https://firstcoasthonorflight.org/>


Thank you everyone and God Bless America!

The Fire Watch

Just released! Our new wallet card with simple instructions for recognizing Veterans in crisis and getting them help they need.


St. Johns County police are the 1st recipients but this will get to all First (Coast) Responders and Fire Watch volunteers by summer!

Together, we can end Veteran suicide and SAVE lives.



FW
THE FIRE WATCH

S Look for **Signs** that a Veteran is in crisis
A Ask if the Veteran is thinking of hurting himself
V Validate the Veteran's experience
E Expedite getting the Veteran help



*Signs of a
Veteran
in Crisis*


- Thinking about hurting or killing herself
- Looking for ways to kill himself
- Thinking about death, dying or suicide
- Self-destructive behavior

Veteran in Crisis

When crisis signs are present, call:

9-1-1

Next step is to call the Veterans Crisis Line, designed to help Veterans in Crisis with caring, qualified VA mental health professionals, 24 hours/day:




**Veterans
Crisis Line**
1-800-273-8255 **PRESS 1**

Veteran Resources

When a Veteran needs support, call:

2-1-1

Find a Resource Guide for Active Duty, Veterans & Military Families at:



FW
THE FIRE WATCH

www.thefirewatch.org



The Fire Watch Veteran Assistance Program and Mobile App

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, approximately twenty veterans commit suicide each day in the United States. In an effort to respond to this national epidemic, St. Johns County has joined surrounding communities and local organizations in the Fire Watch, a program that provides a support system for veterans in crisis. The Fire Watch launched a mobile app that enables veterans and volunteers to foster positive relationships and assist veterans in receiving the help they need. Available on both the Apple App Store and Android Google Play, the app will allow veterans in crisis to quickly receive emergency assistance and connect them with a variety of local resources and allies that will help them build relations and provide one-on-one counseling and support. For more information on the Fire Watch program, please visit www.thefirewatch.org.



Fire Watch Northeast Florida Military/Veteran Resource Guide

Colleagues and military supporters, in collaboration with United Way of Northeast Florida, City of Jacksonville Military Affairs and Veterans Department, K9s for Warriors, Wounded Warrior Project, and other organizations, The Fire Watch (www.thefirewatch.org) is developing the Northeast Florida Military/Veteran Resource Guide web site. The Resource Guide provides a listing of resources oriented to active duty members, veterans and military families including sections on Resources and Assistance; Financial Assistance; Legal Assistance; Healthcare; Housing and Transportation; Women Veterans, Military Spouses and others. While the Resource Guide web site will be available in April 2020, given the many challenges our military members and their families are currently facing we want to provide this information to our community now.

We are fortunate to have resources across our five Northeast Florida available for our military community that are outlined in the attached Resource Guide. If you need to talk with a care coordinator, please contact United Way of Northeast Florida by dialing 2-1-1 or <https://unitedwaynefl.org/get-help/>. Northeast Florida Veterans Service Officers can be contacted at the City of Jacksonville Military Affairs and Veterans Department (904) 255-5550; vetsvcs@coj.net; <https://www.coj.net/departments/military-and-veterans-affairs/military-and-veterans-affairs.aspx>; Baker County Veterans Service (904)259-2516; tony.esterling@bakercountyfl.org; Clay County Veteran Services (904)-269-6326; <https://www.claycountygov.com/departments/veterans-services#ad-image-0>; Nassau County Veterans Service (904) 548-4670; bsullivan@nassauclerk.com; <https://www.nassauclerk.com/veterans-service/>; St. Johns County Veteran's Services (904) 209-6160; <http://www.sjcfcl.us/VeteransServices/index.aspx>. Counseling services are available through the Veterans Administration, Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic at Centerstone Jacksonville <https://centerstone.org/cohen-military-family-clinic/jacksonville/> and other providers.

The Resource Guide is a work in progress but we believe providing this information now will be of value. Please feel free to forward to anyone who would benefit from this Guide. If you are aware of additional resources that may be added to the Guide or have questions please contact us at neflmilitaryresources@gmail.com

Michael P. Fleming
Brigadier General (ret)
Chair, The Fire Watch

H.R. 4446 – National POW/MIA Memorial and Museum Act of 2019



The National POW/MIA Memorial and Museum needs your help.

On National POW/MIA Recognition Day 2019, H.R. 4446 – National POW/MIA Memorial and Museum Act of 2019 was introduced to the 116th Congress. This Bill designates the Memorial and Museum that will be constructed on an approximately 26-acre area on the POW-MIA Memorial Parkway in Jacksonville, Florida, as the “National POW/MIA Memorial and Museum.” H.R. 4446 will officially designate the Memorial and Museum as National. It needs co-sponsors, so contact your Representative today to urge support.

Contact your Representative to Co-Sponsor H.R. 4446.



SURVIVOR OUTREACH SERVICES

Strength
built on
Sacrifice

Your Florida SOS Team

St. Augustine Area

Keith Ham
Support Coordinator
310 Charlotte Street
St. Augustine, FL 32085
(904) 823-0157 (desk)
(904) 472-7689 (cell)
keith.c.ham.ctr@mail.mil

Tallahassee Area

Matthew Reeves
Support Coordinator
1225 Easterwood Drive
Tallahassee, FL 32311-3599
(850) 617-0192 (desk)
(850) 459-6630 (cell)
matthew.p.reeves.ctr@mail.mil

Orlando Area

Shinekqua Baines
Support Coordinator
9500 Armed Forces Reserve Drive
Orlando, FL 32827
(407) 240-5939 ext. 1743
shinekqua.l.baines.ctr@mail.mil

Tampa Bay Area

LaShawnda S. Strother
Support Coordinator
2801 Grand Avenue
Pinellas Park, FL 33782
(727)-563-3647
lashawnda.s.strother.ctr@mail.mil

Miami Area

Support Coordinator
9301 NW 33rd Street
Doral, FL 33172-1202
(305) 437-2178

Scholarships & Application Deadlines

There are two primary VA Programs offering educational assistance. While federal benefits do not technically have a due date, it is important to apply as early as possible.

The Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship (Fry Scholarship) is currently available for children of those who died in the line of duty after September 10, 2001. Beginning January 1, 2015, Fry Scholarship will also be available for surviving spouses of those who died in the line of duty after September 10, 2001.

The Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA) Program offers education and training opportunities to eligible dependents of Veterans who are permanently and totally disabled due to a service-related condition or of Veterans who died while on active duty or as a result of a service-related condition.

Application Deadlines for surviving children

Children of Fallen Patriots Foundation

No set amount, available for children of those who died in the line of duty or of a service-connected disability. No application due date.

Freedom Alliance

Scholarships of up to \$5,000 for children of those who died in the line of duty. No application due date.

Fisher House Foundation/ Heroes Legacy Scholarship

Amount varies, for children of those who died while on active duty on or after September 11, 2001. Applications available from early December to March 14.

Special Ops Warrior Foundation

Amount varies, for surviving children of Special Operations Service Members who died in the line of duty. Applications due at least sixty days prior to the start of the semester.

Deadline for multiple relationships

Army Emergency Relief Fund

Amount varies, for surviving spouses and children of soldiers who die while on active duty or in retiree status. Applications available from January 2 to May 1, 2015.

Application Deadlines: For surviving spouses

Aspire

\$3,000 scholarships per semester for spouses of those who died on active duty. Applications due by October 31 for spring semester and June 30 for fall semester each year.

National Military Family Association

\$500 to \$2,500 scholarships for surviving spouses of those who died while on active duty on or after September 11, 2001. Applications available from December 1 to January 31.

Pat Tillman Foundation

Amount varies, scholarships for surviving spouses of those who died on active duty, in veteran status, or in retiree status. Applications available from February 1 to March 6.

Application Deadlines: For surviving siblings

Matthew Freeman Project

\$1,000 scholarships for siblings of those who have died in the line of duty. No application due date

Deadline for multiple relationships

Folds of Honor

\$5,000 scholarships for surviving spouses and children of service members who die in the line of duty or from a service-connected disability. Applications available from January 15 to March 15.

Disclaimer: The information presented in this newsletter is for informational awareness only and does not represent endorsement, sponsorship, recommendation, or promotion of any commercial events, commercial names or brands by the editors of this Newsletter, the Department of Defense, US Army, US Navy, US Air Force, US Coast Guard, National Guard, Reserve, or the federal government. Usage of commercial or trademark names is for identification purposes only.

FLORIDA SURVIVOR OUTREACH SERVICES AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY



Survivor Outreach Services provides long-term support and advocacy for families of the fallen. Our support coordinators and financial counselors are dedicated to helping survivors from all eras understand and apply for benefits as well as stay connected to the Army family for as long as they desire.

Although Survivor Outreach Services is the focus of this newsletter, please know that all branches of the Armed Forces are equally committed to taking care of surviving military families. Please contact us, and we will connect you with additional resources that may be available for your branch of service. To find the Survivor Outreach Services location nearest you, check out the map on this page, or visit www.sos.army.mil.





VA will give away video-calling devices to connect veterans

By *NIKKIWENTLING* | *STARS AND STRIPES* Published: April 15, 2020

WASHINGTON – Facebook Inc. and the Department of Veterans Affairs will provide 7,400 free video-calling devices to veterans to help them stay connected to friends and family during the coronavirus pandemic, the department announced Wednesday.

Facebook and the VA are giving away Portals, which are video-calling hubs that require a Facebook account to work. The device allows users to call people from their Facebook friends list or through their WhatsApp accounts. They retail for \$129.

To be eligible for a free Portal, veterans must be enrolled in one of the VA's caregiver support programs or a geriatrics and extended care program. Veterans accepted for the Portal will get two devices: one for themselves, and the other for a caregiver or family member.

The American Red Cross is storing the Portals, handling applications and distributing them. Interested veterans are asked to apply at the American Red Cross website.

They'll be distributed on a first-come, first-serve basis. The Red Cross said it could take four to six weeks for veterans to receive them.

In a statement, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said the intent of giving away the devices was to help veterans boost their support systems. The partnership between the VA and Facebook is part of the department's PREVENTS initiative, which is geared toward preventing veteran suicide.

"Our goal is for veterans to feel less isolated through more communication," Wilkie said. We believe this technology will help veterans who might otherwise be unreachable."

Soon after social distancing guidelines took effect in the United States, calls to the Veterans Crisis Line increased. Many of the calls to the crisis line were related to the pandemic.

Lawmakers and veterans organizations have encouraged veterans to check in on one another as social distancing guidelines continue.

The VA said this week that the agency has seen a dramatic increase in veterans using virtual mental health services. The department has shifted more appointments to telehealth in order to comply with social distancing guidelines.

During the month of March, there were more than 34,000 virtual appointments between veterans and their mental health providers up 70% from 20,000 appointments in February.

Here is a good resource for vets who may be experiencing Covid 19 or flu like symptoms. The call center can be reached 24/7 and the vet will be able to reach a nurse. Also for Vets who qualify for the Vet Center they also have a 24/7 call center War Vets 877-927-8387. One of the Vet Center staff will be notified by both text and email to contact and follow-up with the veteran.

Ann McCulliss Johnson LCSW, USA COL (ret)
 Clinical Director, 904-864-2885

VA Health NOW
 YOUR CLINICAL CONTACT CENTER
 1-877-741-3400

VA HEALTH CARE WHERE AND WHEN YOU NEED IT.

Around the Clock Support
 Call us at 1-877-741-3400 to receive immediate clinical and administrative support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

No Co-Pays
 Veterans who are eligible for VA Care are not subject to co-pays when using the Clinical Contact Center.

Nurse Triage
 Connect with a nurse to discuss your health concerns and to determine the best course of action for your care.

Connect with a Provider
 Connect with a doctor or nurse practitioner over the phone or by secure video to discuss your care.

***Pharmacy**
 Pharmacists are available to assist you and your care team to support your path to healing.

VISN 8 Clinical Contact Center

The VISN 8 Clinical Contact Center is a service of the VA Sunshine Healthcare Network (VISN 8) - providing 24/7, virtual urgent care to Veterans enrolled for VA Health Care in Florida, South Georgia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Veterans who receive care in the network can call us around the clock to get their health questions or concerns answered from the comfort and convenience of their home, or wherever they may be.

Services include general administrative support, nurse advice and triage, virtual visits with a doctor or nurse practitioner via telephone or VA Video Connect.

There are no co-payments for using the VISN 8 Clinical Contact Center!

*Note: The Clinical Contact Center should not be used for emergency situations. In the event of a life-threatening emergency, please dial 911 or visit your closest emergency room.
 Prescription medications may be subject to co-pays.

To learn more, visit www.visn8.va.gov/coc.asp.

VA U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
 Veterans Health Administration
 VA Sunshine Healthcare Network (VISN 8)

The Fire Watch

Not in crisis, but frustrated by this continued isolation?

Just want to chat with a fellow Veteran?

Check out Vets4Warriors - "We've Been Where You Are and We're With You Now." A call center manned 24/7 by peers.

Give them a shout! 855.838.8255



1-855-838-8255
Vets4Warriors.com

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA DAYTONA BEACH CHAPTER 1048 FOOD DRIVE During COVID-19

On Tuesday, April 22, 2020, VVA Chapter 1048 1st Vice President Bob Adkins and a squad of chapter members gathered at our basecamp parking lot, VFW Post 3282 (thank you Commander Chris Gates) wearing masks and gloves prepared for non-contact donations of food from our generous Volusia County community. This food drive, the 2nd this month will assist the resident of the Halifax Urban Ministries Barracks of Hope,



which provides transitional housing for up to 9 months to male and female veterans who have struggled with homelessness, addiction, and mental health. Single occupancy rooms are provided, along with mental health counseling, case management, and three meals per day. In 2019, Barracks of Hope served 52 veterans and helped move 28 into permanent housing. Also this month, VVA 1048 also provided a monetary donation for a woodworking project at the barracks. A huge Thank You to all the volunteers. "Never Again Will One Generation of Veterans Abandon Another"

*Rod Phillips,
President*



Mare Island Museum

Close Call



Admiral Nimitz was the architect of, and led, our Nation's massive Pacific Fleet throughout the dark days of World War II. He was also the man who signed the instrument of the Japanese surrender aboard the USS MISSOURI in Tokyo Bay ending that horrible war. If you look closely at photographs where you can see his left hand you will notice his ring finger is missing beyond the first knuckle. He nearly lost his entire hand and perhaps his career in an incident on the Mare Island built fleet oiler USS MAUMEE (Fuel Ship #14) in 1916.

Several years before he lost that finger, the Navy began the process of converting from coal to oil to fire the boilers of its fleet of steam powered warships. That meant that the colliers that carried the coal to create the steam for the fleet needed to be replaced with large ships designed to carry oil rather than coal. In 1912 Congress authorized the construction of two fleet oilers to carry that new fuel. There was a spirited competition between east and west coast shipyards, but both ships, the KANAWHA and the MAUMEE, ended up being awarded to Mare Island due to their lower bids and reputation for delivering as promised. The ships were to be identical in hull structure but powered differently. The Kanawha would have traditional boilers and triple expansion steam engines and the MAUMEE was to become the first surface ship in the Navy to be powered by a diesel engine. The KANAWHA's engines were built at Mare Island, but the diesel for the MAUMEE would be constructed on the east coast

The construction and installation of that diesel was overseen by the Navy's only real expert on diesel engines, the submariner Lt. Chester Nimitz. The original plan was to ship the diesel to Mare Island Naval Shipyard for installation, but that plan was changed, and the MAUMEE ended up getting towed to New York Naval Shipyard for the diesel to be installed and tested. It was during that testing that Nimitz got his hand caught in the massive gearing and lost

his finger and nearly his whole hand. In his own words "It was a clear case of my having my fingers where they had no business to be. A heavy art-craft gold ring was the only thing that prevented my whole hand from being drawn in. It stopped operations for a moment and enabled me to pull away the rest of the hand." Instead of losing his hand, and possibly his life, Nimitz recovered quickly and soon went to sea on the newly commissioned

MAUMEE as both its Executive Officer and Chief Engineer.

The MAUMEE soon pioneered something that had never been done before, refueling ships at sea. With World War I looming this capability soon became critical as German submarines preyed on US convoys. The solution was destroyer escorts and keeping those escorts fueled all the way across the Atlantic and back would rely on the techniques developed by Nimitz aboard the MAUMEE. Those techniques would prove critical in the vast Pacific Theater of operations during World War II. MAUMEE even put in a showing in the Pacific after spending most of that war in the Atlantic.

Due to COVID-19 the museum is closed for now, but when this pandemic is history come visit Mare Island's newest monument to the workers and sailors who won the Cold War, the historic Alden Park, St. Peter's Chapel, Naval Officers Mansions and the Mare Island Museum. On this first United States (US) Naval base on the Pacific Coast, you will be treated to one of the largest non-federal collections of official US Navy artifacts anywhere. Artifacts range from an anchor lost by the HMS CENTURION after her horrific voyage around Cape Horne in 1739, cannons captured in 1871 during a punitive expedition against the Kingdom of Joseon in Korea by the US Asiatic Squadron, to the control room of a Cold War era submarine constructed with actual components from Vallejo's namesake, the nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine MARIANO G. VALLEJO (SSBN 658). Stop by and check us out. We are located at 1100 Railroad Avenue on Mare Island in Vallejo and across the street from historic dry dock 1 (completed construction in 1891). Open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on weekdays and from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. every Saturday. We are closed on Sundays.

Mare Island Museum

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One of only three US Navy SEALs to be awarded the Medal of Honor in Vietnam . . .

By Ned Forney, Writer, Saluting America's Veterans

"I lost an eye and part of my head and brain and had some other bodily injuries. I have another eye. You just go on."

- Tommy Norris, US Navy SEAL and Vietnam War Medal of Honor recipient



From April 10-13, 1972, Thomas "Tommy" Norris, a 28-year old native of Jacksonville, Florida, who was an Eagle Scout and had joined the Navy in 1967, became one of only three SEALs to be awarded the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War.

In early April 1972, after USAF pilot Lt. Col. Icaal "Gene" Hambleton was shot down over enemy territory, the Air Force launched what would become the longest and most intense rescue operation of the Vietnam War.

In repeated attempts to save the pilot, fourteen Americans were killed, eight additional aircraft were shot down, and two Airmen became stranded behind enemy lines.

On April 10, with the situation rapidly deteriorating, Norris and his five-man team were sent into North Vietnamese territory to rescue the downed crewmen.

Over the next three days, Norris and his men, hit by mortar and rocket attacks and engaged in intense fire fights, repeatedly risked their lives to search for the missing Americans.

At one point in the harrowing ordeal, Lt. Norris and South Vietnamese commando Nguyen Van Kiet left their forward base, swam more than a mile down an enemy river, and after fighting off multiple attacks from communist forces, rescued Hambleton and another downed Airman.

For his "outstanding display of decisive leadership and undaunted courage," Norris was awarded the Medal of Honor.

“I don’t feel like I was anybody special,” he later said. “It was a mission that needed to be accomplished. Anyone else in my position would have done the same thing.”

Postscript:

Six months later, while on a intelligence gathering mission, Norris was again hit by enemy forces. During a four-hour firefight, Norris and his men, surrounded by nearly 200 enemy soldiers, held their position and killed countless communist attackers.

But as the SEALs attempted to make their way to a beach extraction point, Norris, covering his team’s withdrawal, was shot in the head and presumed dead.

Fellow SEAL Michael E. Thornton, however, refused to abandon his comrade. Dashing through enemy fire, he recovered his unconscious buddy, carried him to the beach, and ran into the ocean.

For the next two hours, the 23-year-old Greenville, South Carolina native, who was also wounded, kept Norris and another injured man afloat until they were picked up by a friendly boat.

Norris survived the ordeal. After returning to the States, spending three years in the hospital, and undergoing numerous surgeries (his first one lasted 19 hours), he was medically retired from the Navy. As a result of his nearly-fatal head wound, Norris lost his left eye and part of his skull.

For his actions on October 31, 1972, Thornton was awarded the Medal of Honor, becoming the first MOH recipient to be recognized for saving the life of a fellow MOH recipient. Thornton retired from the Navy in 1992. The two men frequently attend MOH events together and co-authored a book, "By Honor Bound."

Today we pay tribute to Tommy Norris, Michael Thornton, their families, and all those who served, sacrificed, and died in Vietnam. We will never forget you!

Veterans' Diseases Associated with Agent Orange

The VA recognizes and assumes certain cancers and other health problems to be related to a Veterans' qualifying military service and associated with exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides. Veterans and their survivors maybe eligible for disability compensation or survivors' benefits for these diseases. Here is a current list:

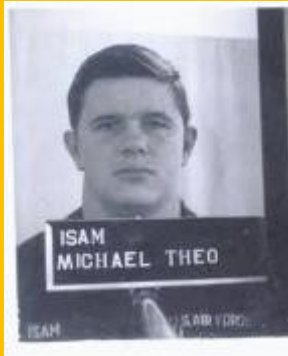
1. AL Amyloidosis
2. Chronic B-cell Leukemias
3. Chloracne (or similar acneform disease)
4. Diabetes Mellitus Type 2
5. Hodgkin's Disease
6. Ischemic Heart Disease
7. Multiple Myeloma
8. Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma
9. Parkinson's Disease
10. Peripheral Neuropathy, Acute and Subacute
11. Porphyrria Cutanea Tarda
12. Prostate Cancer
13. Respiratory Cancers (including lung cancer)
14. Soft Tissue Sarcomas
(other than osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma,
or mesothelioma)

Children with Birth Defects:

VA presumes certain birth defects in children of Vietnam and Korean Veterans associated with Veteran's qualifying military service.

“The Wall” by Michael Isam

I was fortunate to be the only “civilian” invited to attend the DoD / VA Wounded, Ill, and Injured conference in Washington D.C. This was to announce the results of the coming together of great minds to decide how to best treat our personnel returning from war.



My day started with boarding in the wee hours of the morning flight in Jacksonville, FL and flying to the DC airport. Luckily, there was a shuttle to the hotel where the conference was to be held. The sights were magnificent as we wound our way to the hotel. I made my way to the conference area and checked in. I had a few hours to spare, so I took the opportunity to visit “The Wall” and pay my respects to my Vietnam comrades.

Taking the subway was an incredible journey all on its own. I was dressed in my civvies and wore my Disabled American Veterans cap. It was the eye-catcher and I had many wonderful conversations in the 3 times I got lost by taking the wrong train. When I finally made it to the correct stop by one of the many buildings that comprise the Smithsonian, I was ill prepared for the sight of my life. As I emerged from the dark underground, I was treated to a spectacular view of the Washington Monument. Four blocks later, I was at the base. I felt very insignificant, but also very important. I, an ordinary citizen, was standing at the base of the monument erected in honor of our greatest leader. I joined by a young man named Ben who invited me to walk with him to “The Wall”. He went every Friday to pay his respects to the comrades of his father who had recently passed away.

On the journey, we passed the WWII Memorial, the Vietnam Women's memorial and the Vietnam Soldier Memorial. Such dignity displayed in such a gut wrenching pose. The walk to “The Wall” was a short one...I had many conversations with fellow comrades about "The Wall" but none of what was spoken of could match the actual experience of being there.

About 50 to 60 people were at the "The Wall" when I arrived. It was totally quiet. Not in an eerie way, but a quiet of profound respect. The design of it does what it was intended to do. Starting above it, descending into the depths of the names of our fallen comrades, and ascending from it with perhaps the beginning of a healing. It did for me.

While I was at the very bottom, I met five other comrades. Like a scene from a movie, we all turned toward each other, made eye contact, came together with our arms around each other and we wept. It was a solemn encounter that seemed to last forever. Not one "Welcome Home" was uttered, which I thought, many hours later, was completely out of character for all of us.



I started my way back to 2007 by walking up the ramp passing more names of fallen comrades. By the time I reached the end of "The Wall", my composure had almost returned and I was able to make my way back to the hotel for the conference. I got lost on the subway twice more. After my visit to "The Wall", the pabulum dispensed by the dignitaries at the conference was totally anti-climactic. (How utterly coincidental that as I transfer my memory of this event to the "ones and zeroes" that will be translated once again to recognizable form for you, the reader, that the unmistakable ground shaking rumble of a "Jolly Green" helicopter should pass over my house).

On the plane coming home, it swept over me again. This time there was a strength that allowed me to look back upon the experience and view the healing that has begun. I related the story to my lovely bride Dianna I spent many hours wrapped in her loving embrace as the pain, remorse, and fear once again wracked my fragile human form.

I must thank Ben who took time from his schedule to assist me on my path to my healing. God Bless you Ben, you were an Angel lighting my path!

VVA Florida State Council yearly awards

David Treffinger, President of the Col. William G. Byrns Chapter 1059 in Clay County, received the Florida State Council's John Koprowski Member of the Year award at the March 7 state council meeting in Lake Mary, FL.

Other award recipients:

Chapter of the Year: Chapter 1088, Nassau County.

Treasurer of the Year: Bill Callan, 1088, Nassau County.

Secretary of the Year: Darline Teel-Williams, Chapter 1059, Clay County.

Website of the Year: Chapter 1048, Volusia County.

Newsletter of the Year: Chapter 1059, Clay County.

Michael Weber Membership of the Year (over 100 members): Chapter 1048, Volusia.

Michael Weber Membership of the Year (under 100 members): Chapter 1125, Boca Raton.

Incarcerated Member of the Year: Ted Schultz, Chapter 1080, Union Correctional Institution.

AVVA Member of the Year: Sharon Lynn Unger, Chapter 1046, Duval County.

President's Award: Col. Charley Price, US Army retired, was recipient of the President's Award in recognition of his lifetime of unselfish and dedicated commitment to the well-being, benefits and health of America's Vietnam Veterans and with special appreciation for his contributions to the VVA Florida State Council through his many years of legislative support and service to his country.

For additional information, please contact David Treffinger, Florida State Council E-Recon newsletter editor, at e-recon@vvaflsc.org or (609) 320-1723 (cell).



Dave Treffinger, VVA 1059 Clay County receives Member of the Year Award



Bob Adkins receives the VVA 1048 Awards



VVA 1084 President John Leslie reading a Tribute in memory of member Bob Dinkins

From Friend and Council Member Tracy Sefcik

I would like to say I pray all is going well for you in St. Johns County. I just wanted to give you a few updates with me and Cross Country Cycle 4 Vets.

I finally finished my book called 10 MPH Coast to Coast - a book about my 2018 Southern Tier journey as a solo female cyclist to where I was able to raise over \$35k for my fellow injured veterans through the Gary Sinise Foundation. It can be found on Amazon as I self-published it. It is about those 3042 miles from San Diego to St Augustine FL, the good, the bad, the mental breakdowns I had along my way and all the wonderful people I meet along my way.

Now for Cross Country Cycle 4 Vets: I have been able to raise over \$14k for my new foundation for injured veterans via the Oscar Mike Foundation, started by a paralyzed Marine himself.

This journey will have me cycling 2547 miles through 10 States and 2 Countries in 2021 for

the 20th Anniversary of 9/11. Donations can be made on my website or mail.

Take care and be safe, Tracy Sefcik

Cross Country Cycle 4 Vets, Phone: 847-650-3830

Email: Tracy.Sefcik@CrossCountryCycle4Vets.com

Website: <http://www.crosscountrycycle4vets.com/>

Donate Oscar Mike: <https://donorbox.org/cccycle4vets>

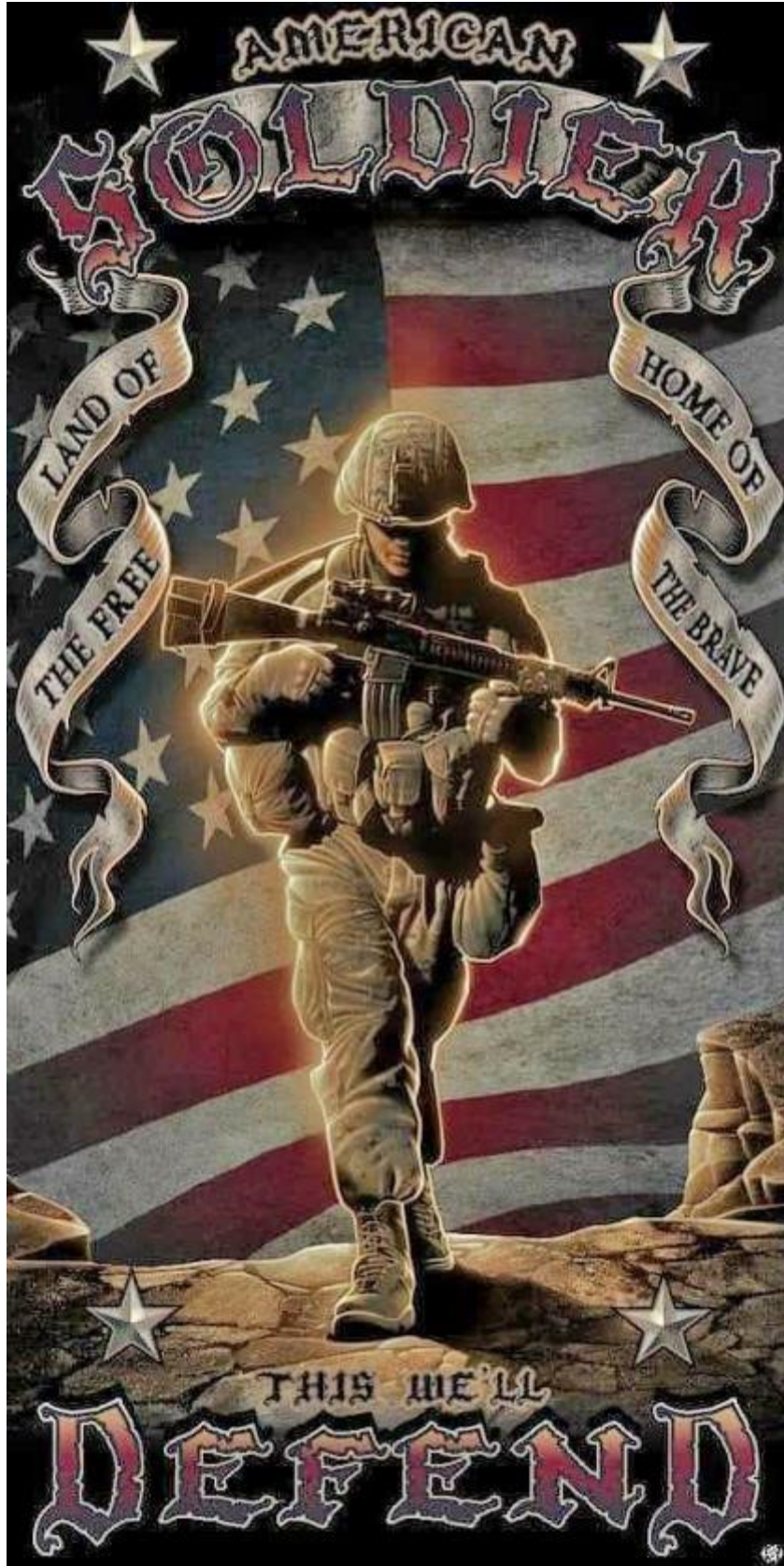
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Crosscountrycycle4vets>

Instagram: [CrossCountryCycle4Vets](https://www.instagram.com/CrossCountryCycle4Vets)

YouTube Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=okmHR753wqo>



Chairman Dudley welcoming Tracy after her Cross Country Ride, raising money for Injured Veterans



VVA Chapter 1048 adopts a cemetery

By David Treffinger, E-Recon editor

What was once a neglected and vandalized cemetery in Ormond Beach has now become a place of pride thanks to VVA Chapter 1048 in Daytona Beach.

The historic black cemetery, of nearly three acres, has been adopted by Chapter 1048, thanks to the efforts of chapter Vice President Bob Adkins and a group of chapter members who volunteered to help clean up the Oakridge Cemetery located on Nova Road in Ormond Beach.

“It means a lot to have someone take an interest,” Oakridge Cemetery Association President Deborah Hamm said. “They do a lot of cleaning. They have taken out a lot of debris.”

Chapter 1048 had been looking to adopt a cemetery for the last two years but couldn’t find the right place and the right people to develop a relationship.

Until last August.

The Oakridge Cemetery, which dates back to 1925, was vandalized as flags were removed from graves, broken and burned according to an August 2, 2019 story in the Ormond Beach Observer. The incident was reported on July 29.

“This is our sacred ground,” Rosa Morey, vice president and chief financial officer, told the Ormond Beach Observer.

Initially, the managers of the Lowe’s store in Ormond Beach came to the aid of the privately-owned cemetery. They did some cleaning and placed the headstones in their proper position.

That’s when Bob Adkins and Chapter 1048 became involved. When Lowe’s said it was just a one-time effort, Adkins spearheaded for the chapter’s involvement.

“I have driven by this cemetery for 16 years and I had no idea it was there,” Adkins said. “I found the entrance to the cemetery and I drove in and through what a beautiful place this is. How could this place exist and not anyone know about it.”

Still the cemetery needed help.

Adkins contacted a neighbor who knew how to get in contact with Oakridge Cemetery officials.

Morey told the Ormond Beach Observer, that Oakridge is the final resting place of many of the community members from the Liberia and Sudan communities in Ormond Beach, which originated from the slaves that settled in the city generations ago.

Adkins made contact with Deborah Hamm, president of the association, and told her that the chapter saw what happened to the cemetery and that they were looking to adopt a cemetery.

“I told her your cemetery needs help and this chapter is looking to adopt and support a cemetery that has veterans in it,” Adkins said.

The Oakridge Cemetery has 120 veterans, including a hand full of Vietnam Veterans.

Several weeks later the chapter received the okay from the Oakridge Cemetery Association for Chapter 1048 to adopt the cemetery and place the chapter logo on the fence leading into the cemetery. The chapter then went to work.

“We need to clean up this cemetery and get it ready for Veterans Day and make sure there are flags for all the Veterans,” Adkins told the membership at the October meeting.

“We had a detail show up, probably 15 members.”

It was then suggested by Chapter 1048 AVVA rep Diana Schaack that they needed to make the cemetery a Wreaths Across America point for a December 14 ceremony. Through her efforts the cemetery became a Wreaths Across America location and the chapter purchased 130 wreaths for the graves.

“I go the chapter and tell them we’re going to clean, buckle down on this cemetery as it now a Wreaths Across America point thanks to our AVVA,” Adkins said. “I need a detail and we’re going to go in there and spend a lot of hours and clean this place up really nice. Trim all the trees, clean the headstones. We are really going to make this a show place.

“I had 32 members show up on a Wednesday morning at 8 o’clock. We commenced into cleaning up the cemetery. We detailed it just like the military, we had it standings tall. Even our AVVA came pitched a tent and provided lunch for everybody. We were there six or seven hours.”

Headstones were turned from black to white, grass was cut, trees were trimmed, and fresh flags were placed in advance of the Wreaths Across America ceremony.

“We had about 120 people come through that gate,” Adkins said. “I was shocked. The association praised us for what we do and what we believe in.”

“Saturday (Dec. 14), the day we laid the wreaths we presented them with a plaque thanking them for what they’ve done, for the cemetery, for the people of the community,” Hamm said.

The chapter continues to work on the conservation of the hollowed grounds.

Adkins notes that the experience has been beneficial to the members of Chapter 1048.

“We have guys that go there now, they know no one over there, but they have adopted a headstone or a

gravesite and they make sure it is detailed all the time,” Adkins said. “We have one gentleman that has adopted a guy named Willie.

“It is unbelievable what has happened with that cemetery for some of our members. It gives them peace. These guys see progress on what we’ve done. It is just amazing. I’ll drive in and a lot of times there will be one of our members walking around.

“We are going to make sure this place never gets vandalized again with people seeing these Vietnam Vets in there. These days our Vets and the AVVA, they are cruising that place.”

As a result of Chapter 1048’s efforts, the Oakridge Cemetery Association allowed the chapter’s logo on the fence heading into the cemetery.

“It is rewarding to me to see our chapter logo on the fence,” Adkins said. “It just proves to the public what we do and what our legacy is. Our legacy is working together as Veterans in these communities and taking care of our dead.”

Morey: “The cemetery is actually gorgeous since they ... when I first got back (in 2012) it was terrible as you couldn’t walk out there. Now it is like a park, a final resting place.”



*Pictures courtesy of
Bob Adkins*

Zahara Veterans Network, Inc.

#ZaharaVets are encouraging Veteran Service Organizations within the state of Florida, to request emergency relief kits that have been donated to the veteran community from a corporate sponsor.

There are a limited number of kits available and they will be offered on a first come, first served basis with priority being given to organizations that have senior veterans (ages 65+) as members.

Registration must be completed via <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/zvn-inc-emergency-relief-kits-tickets-102347355696>

EMERGENCY RELIEF KITS AVAILABLE FOR VETERAN SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

COMPLETE THE REQUEST FORM ON
[EVENTBRITE.COM](https://www.eventbrite.com)

EMERGENCY RELIEF KITS INCLUDE:

- EMERGENCY BLANKET
- BAR OF SOAP
- WATER PURIFICATION TABLETS
- WATERPROOF MATCHES
- EMERGENCY RAIN PONCHO
- TOOTHBRUSH
- TOOTHPASTE
- HYGIENE TOWELETTES IN A DRAWSTRING BAG



We want to send a huge "Thank you" to the Heartillery Group and Republican Women's Club of Duval Federated for their assistance with helping coordinate this project and providing funds to cover trucks and shipping of these kits to veteran groups within the state of Florida. "There's no limit to what we as women can achieve"!!!

From Lynn Geiser, VSO at DAV

HOW DISABILITY RATINGS WORK

BENEFITS CHART - Each increased level includes all benefits of the previous levels.

SERVICE CONNECTED PERCENTAGE	DESCRIPTION
0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10-point Veteran preference in federal hiring • No cost health care and prescription drugs for service-connected disabilities • Small copays for all other healthcare and mental healthcare and prescription drugs • Use of commissaries, exchanges, and morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) retail facilities, in-person and online. • Non-VA Urgent Care visits at \$30/visit including 14-day prescription (in network) • Non-VA Emergency Room for service-connected conditions or non-service-connected condition if you have no OHI (Other Health Insurance) – Must contact your VAMC within 72 hours • VA Dental Insurance Program (VADIP)
10%-20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waiver of VA funding fee for home loan • Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (10% with a serious employment handicap) • Burial and plot allowance
30%-40%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel allowance for scheduled appointments for care at a VA medical facility or VA authorized health care facility • 10-point Veteran preference in federal hiring (Direct hire authority) • Additional compensation for eligible dependents (may include aid and attendance for eligible spouse)
50%-90%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No cost health care and prescription medications – no copays • Concurrent receipt of military retired pay • 3 no cost Non-VA Urgent Care visits including 14-day prescription (in network) (\$30/visit after use of 3 visits)
100% No restriction to income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No cost dental care • Uniformed Services ID card • S-DVI waiver of \$10,000 life insurance at 100% if unemployed for at least 6 months • Federal student loan forgiveness • Space-A Flights (Cat VI) - Veteran only • Non-VA ER – Must contact your VAMC within 72 hours • --With Permanent & Total Status-- • Dependents Educational Assistance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special restorative training • Dependent's CHAMPVA–Civilian Health and Medical Program (not Tricare eligible) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VA Dental Insurance Program (VADIP) for dependents

Individual Unemployability – 60%-90%

Same as 100% except must be unemployable due to service-connected disabilities with part time income restriction \$13,064/year (2019)

VA Derivative Benefits Eligibility Service-Connected Matrix

https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/derivative_sc.asp

<http://vcag.info> Veterans Claims Assistance Group

A fascinating Air War story about a group of Yank misfits and a B-17 in the Pacific near Australia. Maybe one day they will make this into a movie?

The Most-Honored Photograph

Doesn't look like much, does it? But, depending upon your definition, this photograph, a team effort by 9 men, is the most honored picture in U. S. History. If you want to find out about it, read on. It's an interesting tale about how people sometimes rise beyond all expectations.



It takes place in the early days of World War II, in the South Pacific, and if you're a World War II history buff, you may already know about it.

The Screwed Up Pilot

First, let's get this out of the way. Jay Zeamer wasn't a photographer by trade. He was mostly a wanna-be pilot. He looked good on paper, having graduated with a degree in civil engineering from MIT, joining the Army Air Corps, and receiving his wings in March 1941. He was a B-26 bomber co-pilot when World War II started.

His classmates all rapidly became lead pilots and squadron leaders, but not Jay. He couldn't pass the pilot check tests despite trying numerous times. He was a good pilot but just couldn't seem to land the B-26. Landing, from what I've read, was considered one of the more important qualifications for a pilot. Stuck as a co-pilot while his classmates and then those from the classes behind him were promoted, he got bored and lost all motivation.

Things came to a head when co-pilot Zeamer fell asleep while his plane was in flight. Not just in flight, but in flight through heavy anti-aircraft fire during a bombing run. He only woke when the pilot beat him on the chest because he needed help. His squadron commander had him transferred to a B-17 squadron in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea where he was allowed to fly as a fill-in navigator and occasionally as a co-pilot. He was well-liked and popular — on the ground. But no one wanted to fly with him.

Zeamer finally managed to get into the pilot's seat by volunteering for a photoreconnaissance mission when the scheduled pilot became ill. The mission, an extremely dangerous one over the Japanese stronghold at Rabaul, won Zeamer a Silver Star — despite the fact that he still hadn't qualified to pilot a B-17.

The Eager Beavers

Zeamer becomes the Operations Officer (a ground position) at the 43rd



The Eager Beavers: (Back Row) Bud Thues, Zeamer, Hank Dominski, Sarnoski (Front Row) Vaughn, Kendrick, Able, Pugh.

Air Group. Despite his lack of qualification, he still managed to fly as a B-17 fill-in pilot fairly often. He had discovered found that he loved to fly B-17s on photoreconnaissance missions, and he wanted to do it full-time. There were only three things standing in his way: he didn't have a crew, he didn't have an airplane, and oh, yeah, he still wasn't a qualified pilot.

He solved the first problem by gravitating to every misfit and ne'er-do-well in the 43rd Air Group. As another pilot, Walt Krell, recalled, "He recruited a crew of renegades and screwoffs. They were the worst — men nobody else wanted. But they gravitated toward one another and made a hell of a team."

The plane came later. An old, beat-up B-17, serial number 41-2666, that had seen better days was flown into their field to be scavenged for spare parts. Captain Zeamer had other ideas. He and his crew decided to rebuild the plane in their spare time since they weren't going to get to fly any other way. Exactly how they managed to accomplish their task is the subject of some debate. Remember, there were so few spare parts available that their 'plane' was actually brought in originally to be a parts donor.

But rebuild it they did. Once it was in flying shape the base commander congratulated them and said he'd find a new crew to fly it. Not surprisingly, Zeamer and his crew took exception to this idea, and according to Walt Krell the crew slept in their airplane, having loudly announced that the 50 caliber machine guns were kept loaded in case anyone came around to 'borrow' it. There was a severe shortage of planes, so the base commander ignored the mutiny and let the crew fly — but generally expected them to take on missions that no one else wanted.

Once they started flying their plane on difficult photoreconnaissance missions, they made some modifications. Even among the men of a combat air station, the Eager Beavers became known as gun nuts. They replaced all of the light 30 caliber machine guns in the plane with heavier 50 caliber weapons. Then the 50 caliber machine guns were replaced with double 50 caliber guns. Zeamer had another pair of machine guns mounted to the front of the plane so he could remotely fire them like a fighter pilot. And the crew kept extra machine guns stored in the plane, just in case one of their other guns jammed or malfunctioned.

As odd as all of this sounds, the South Pacific theatre in the early days of World War II was a chaotic area scattered over thousands of miles with very little equipment. Having a plane with an apparently nutty crew who volunteered for every awful mission not surprisingly made the commanding officers look the other way.

Buka

In June 1943, the U. S. had secured Guadalcanal in the southern Solomon Islands. They knew the Japanese had a huge base at Rabaul, but were certain there were other airfields being built in the Northern Solomon Islands. They asked for a volunteer crew to take photographs of Bougainville Island to plan for an eventual



invasion, and of Buka airfield on the north side of the island to assess for increased activity there. It was considered a near-suicide mission — flying hundreds of miles over enemy airspace in a single, slow bomber. Not to mention photoreconnaissance meant staying in level flight and taking no evasive action even if they were attacked.

The only crew that volunteered, of course, was Jay Zeamer and the Eager Beavers. One of the crew, bombardier Joseph Sarnovski, had absolutely no reason to volunteer. He'd already been in combat for 18 months and was scheduled to go home in 3 days. Being a photo mission, there was no need for a bombardier. But if his friends were going, he wanted to go, and one of the bombardier's battle stations was to man the forward machine guns. They might need him, so he went.

They suspected the airstrip at Buka had been expanded and reinforced but weren't sure until they got close. As soon as the airfield came in sight, they saw numerous fighters taking off and heading their way. The logical thing to do would have been to turn right and head for home. They would be able to tell the intelligence officers about the increased number of planes at Buka even if they didn't get photos.

But Zeamer and photographer William Kendrick knew that photos would be invaluable for subsequent planes attacking the base, and for Marines who were planning to invade the island later. Zeamer held the plane level (tilting the wings even one degree at that altitude could put the photograph half a mile off target) and Kendrick took his photos, which gave plenty of time for over 20 enemy fighters to get up to the altitude Old 666 was flying at.

The fighter group, commanded by Chief Petty Officer Yoshio Ooki, was experienced and professional. They carefully set up their attack, forming a semi-circle all around the B-17 and then attacking from all directions at once. Ooki didn't know about the extra weapons the Eager Beavers had mounted to their plane, but it wouldn't matter if he had; there was no way for a single B-17 to survive those odds.

During the first fighter pass, the plane was hit by hundreds of machine-gun bullets and cannon shells. Five crewmen of the B-17 were wounded and the plane badly damaged. All of the wounded men stayed at their stations and were still firing when the fighters came in for a second pass, which caused just as the first. Hydraulic cables were cut, holes the size of footballs appeared in the wings, and the front plexiglass canopy of the plane was shattered.

Zeamer was wounded during the second fighter pass, but kept the plane flying level and took no evasive action until Kendrick called over the intercom that the photography was completed. Only then did he begin to move the plane from side-to-side allowing his gunners better shots, just as the fighters came in for the third wave of attacks. The third pass blew out the oxygen system of the plane, which was flying at 28,000 feet. Despite the obvious structural damage, Zeamer put the plane in an emergency dive to get down to a level where there was enough oxygen for them, men, to survive.

During the dive, a 20mm cannon shell exploded in the navigator's compartment. Sarnovski, who was al

ready wounded, was blown out of his compartment and beneath the cockpit. Another crewman reached him and saw there was a huge wound in his side. Despite his obviously mortal wound, Sarnoski said, "Don't worry about me, I'm all right" and crawled back to his gun which was now exposed to 300 miles an hour winds since the plexiglass front of the plane was now gone. He shot down one more fighter before he died a minute or two later.

The battle continued for over 40 minutes. The Eager Beavers shot down several fighters and heavily damaged several others. The B-17 was so heavily damaged, however, that they didn't expect to make the several hundred miles long flight back home. Sarnoski had already died from his wounds. Zeamer had continued piloting the plane despite multiple wounds. Five other men were seriously wounded.

Flight Officer Ooki's squadron returned to Buka out of ammunition and fuel. They understandably reported the B-17 was destroyed and about to crash in the ocean when they last saw it.

The B-17 didn't quite crash, though. Zeamer had lost consciousness from loss of blood but regained it when he was removed from the pilot seat and lay on the floor of the plane. The co-pilot, Lt. Britton, was the most qualified to care for the wounded and was needed in the back of the plane. One of the gunners, Sergeant Able, had liked to sit in the cockpit behind the pilots and watch them fly. That made him the most qualified of the crewman, so he flew the plane with Zeamer advising him from the floor while Britton cared for the wounded.

The plane made it back to base. (Britton did return to the cockpit for the landing.) After the landing, the medical triage team had Zeamer removed from the plane last, because they considered his wounds mortal. Amazingly, the one thing on the plane not damaged was the cameras and the photos in them were considered invaluable in planning the invasion of Bougainville.

Epilogue

All of the wounded men recovered, although it was a close thing for Captain Zeamer. In fact, a death notification was sent to his parents somewhat prematurely. He spent the next year in hospitals recovering from his wounds, but lived a long and happy life, passing away at age 88.

Both Zeamer and Sarnovski were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for the mission, the only time in World War II that two men from one plane ever received America's highest medal for valor in combat. The other members of the crew were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, second only to the Medal of Honor as an award for bravery.

So, somewhat surprisingly, the most decorated combat flight in U. S. history didn't take place in a major battle. It was a photo-reconnaissance flight; the flight of 'old 666' in June of 1943.



AMERICA REMEMBERS — It is with great sadness, we learn the news that Airborne SUPERSTAR Mr. James “Maggie” Megellas, 3rd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR), 82nd Airborne Division has died. He was 103.

James “Maggie” Magellas was born and raised in Fond Du Lac, Wisconsin and graduated from Ripon College in 1942, also accepting a commission as a Lieutenant, Infantry, United States Army.

Four years later, he was one of the most decorated officers in the 82nd Airborne Division and was discharged from the Army with the rank of Captain. He continued serving as a Citizen-Soldier and retired with the rank of Lt. Col.

His awards include the Distinguished Service Cross, two Silver Stars, two Bronze Stars, two Purple Hearts, Presidential Citation w/cluster, the Belgium Fouragere, 6 Campaign Stars, and Master Parachutist badge.

He was selected by General James Gavin, the commanding general of the 82nd Airborne Division to receive the “Military Order of Wilhelm Orange Lanyard” from the Dutch Minister of War in Berlin in 1945, the first American so honored by the Government of Holland.

Magellas fought in the Italian and Western European campaign, first as a Platoon leader, then later as the Company Commander of H Company, 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR).

His most notable battle experiences include action in the Italian mountains near the Anzio beachhead, his combat jump into Holland as part of Operation Market Garden, crossing of the Waal River under heavy German fire in broad daylight, and the Battle of the Bulge.



He finished World War II in the occupation of Berlin and led his Company, the only Company he served with during the entire war, down 5th Avenue, New York City in the January 1946 Victory Parade.

Magellas served in the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) for 32 years with work in Yemen, Panama, South Vietnam and Columbia.

During his work with USAID, he served two years in Vietnam, leading 4,000 soldiers and civilians from Vietnam and other nations in civil-military relations. For this work he received the National Chieu Hoi Medal, and the Psychological Warfare Medal from the South Vietnamese government.

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Web: www.TGGF.org

Please contact the organization or POC of the event below to see if it is still scheduled or has been cancelled, or postponed.



2020

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The logo consists of the letters 'V4V' in a bold, serif font. The 'V's are filled with a pattern of white stars on a dark blue background, while the '4' is a solid dark blue.

Together We are Stronger

**Keeping our Veterans
Informed, Connected, United, and Organized**

V4VFlorida.org

Vets4VetsNJax@gmail.com

Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram: @Vets4VetsNJax

#vets4vetsjax #Jointhevetsmovement #Togetherwearestronger



Mission Statement:

**The Veterans Council of St. Johns County, Inc.
is a 501 C3 Not-For-Profit Florida Corporation.**



The Veterans Council of St. Johns County is comprised of representatives from various veterans' organizations that work with city and county governments and organizations to assist with matters concerning veterans and veterans' activities.

What the Council has done:

- The Veterans Treatment Court
 - Wreaths Across America
 - Homeless Veterans Standdown
 - Veterans Day Parade
 - Vets 4 Vets
- And so much more...

SA-0003147064-01

A question we all may have to ask some day. What should I do if a Veteran passes away?

SECTION 8 Partial list of action to be undertaken upon the death of veteran or retiree.

1. Contact Funeral Director to set-up funeral arrangements and Military Honors (PAFB Mortuary Affairs)
2. Notify Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) (<https://cust-support.dfas.mil/rapiti/nod/>) or call 1-888-332-741
3. Notify Veterans Administration 1-800-827-1000
4. Notify Social Security Administration 1-800-772-1213
5. Notify Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) 1-800-538-9552
6. Notify VA Life Insurance, if applicable 1-800-669-8477
7. Notify SGLI and VGLI Insurance, if applicable 1-800-419-1473
8. Notify Civil Service Retirement System, if applicable 1-888-767-6738
9. Obtain at least 10 certified copies of long form death certificate and 10 copies of short form death certificate from Funerary Directors
10. Notify Life insurance companies, and file appropriate claims
11. Notify Medical, health, disability, travel and accident insurance companies, and file appropriate claims
12. Notify Home owners insurance company
13. Notify Vehicle insurance company
14. Go to the County Property Appraiser's Office and transfer all real estate properties to surviving spouse.
15. Apply for widowed person's Homestead Exemption
16. Apply for appropriate (VA, Civil Service and other) benefits, if applicable
17. Apply for Veterans Burial Benefits and Survivor Benefits, if applicable
18. Check for non-government pension benefits, if applicable
19. Apply for Workmen's Compensation Benefits if applicable.
20. Notify your Accountant or Tax Preparer (unless Estate Lawyer is preparing the final tax returns) provide certified death certificate, previously filed tax return forms, and current earnings and dividend statements.
21. Notify your investment broker or company.
22. Change ownership of joint or solely owned stocks, mutual funds, etc.
23. Cancel any unfulfilled orders arranged by the deceased
24. Notify IRAs and other retirement and investment account administrators
25. Transfer the ownership of bonds
26. Notify your bank(s) and credit union(s)
27. Change all jointly held accounts and correct tax identification numbers (usually Social Security Numbers) (Leave joint accounts intact for 6 months)
28. Cancel direct deposit retirement benefit payments (for SBP, Civil Service and others, if applicable)
29. Re-establish the Title of your safe deposit box
30. Re-establish all outstanding mortgages, personal notes, etc.
31. Apply for any credit life insurance that may exist on loans, credit cards, and mortgages
32. Change Certificates of Deposit
33. Go to Department Of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to transfer titles of all registered vehicles, mobile homes and boats.
34. Notify all credit card companies and cancel all individually held cards of the deceased
35. Review trusts for required actions, if required.
36. If a Will must be probated, contact your attorney. Your name may also need to be revised.
37. Cancel the deceased's Voter Registration and Drivers License.
38. Obtain new military identification cards. Make appointment at <https://rapids-appointments.dmdc.osd.mil/default.asp> or contact Patrick AFB ID Card Section at 321-494-6144/6147
39. Send "Thank You" cards for flowers, memorial donations, food, etc.

From Nila Thompson

rans
s Line




Veterans Crisis Line

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PRESS 1

1-800-273-8255 **PRESS 1**




1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

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Confidential help for
Veterans and their families

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Military/Veterans Crisis Line

1-800-273-8255




Veterans Crisis Line

1-800-273-8255 **PRESS 1**

Confidential chat at MilitaryCrisisLine.net or text 838255

Veterans Councils of Northeast Florida



BAKER COUNTY

President: Larry Porterfield

Meetings:

Second Thursday of each month

Location:

**MacClenny Primitive Baptist Church
Fellowship Hall on North Boulevard**

Time: 1800 (6pm)

CLAY COUNTY

President: Harry Silvers

Meetings:

First Wednesday of each month

Location:

**American Legion Post 250
3939 County Rd 218
Middleburg, FL 32068**

Time: 1400 (2pm)

NASSAU COUNTY

President: Doc Monaghan

Meetings:

First Thursday of each month

Location:

**American Legion Post 54
626 South 3rd St
Fernandina Beach FL 32034**

Time: 1900 (7pm)

DUVAL COUNTY

President: Steve Spickelmier

Meetings:

Third Tuesday of each month

Location:

**American Legion Post 137
Moon Building
5443 San Juan Avenue**

Time: 1900 (7pm)

ST. JOHNS COUNTY

President: Bill Dudley

Meetings:

Last Thursday of each month

Location:

**Health and Human Services Bldg
Muscovy Room, 1st Floor
200 San Sebastian View
St. Augustine, FL 3208**

Time: 1900 (7pm)

Contact Nila Thompson with updates
Nila.ThompsonV4V@gmail.com

National Museum of the Marine Corps

Throughout February and March 2020, the Museum will commemorate the 75th anniversary of the battle of Iwo Jima with special displays and events.

Tomorrow, 19 February, will mark the anniversary of D-Day on Iwo Jima. In commemoration of the battle, the Museum will display both flags raised on Mount Suribachi on 23 February 1945 in our WWII Gallery.

Stop by and see these iconic flags on display until 30 March 2020.

THE BATTLE OF IWO JIMA
1945 - 2020

FLAG RAISINGS ON IWO JIMA

"The raising of the flag on Suribachi means
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- James Forrestal, Secretary of the Navy,
to General Holland M. Smith, USMC

4.8 mi
2.5 mi
IWO JIMA
554 ft
MOUNT SURIBACHI

FLAGS RAISED

1		28 1/2" x 55 1/2"
2		58" x 88 3/4"

IMPORTANT DATES

FEBRUARY 19	D-DAY ON IWO JIMA
FEBRUARY 23	1ST AND 2ND FLAG RAISED
MARCH 14	2ND FLAG TAKEN DOWN
MARCH 26	THE BATTLE OF IWO JIMA ENDS
APRIL 26	BOTH FLAGS RETURN TO THE U.S.

6 FLAG RAISERS*
*The 2nd flag raising

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OF THE
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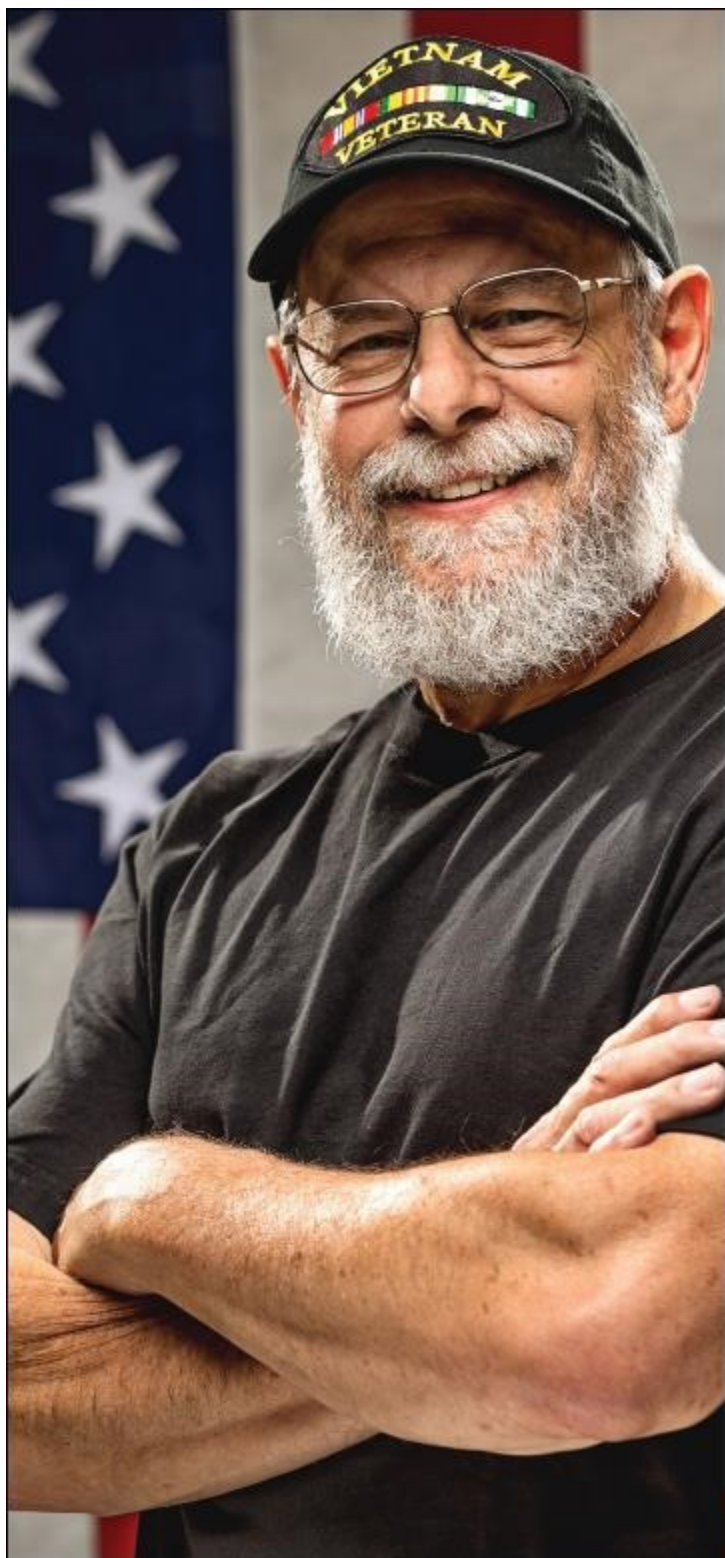
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"I've proudly served as Chairman of the Community Hospice Veterans Partnership (CHVP) since 2011. CHVP partners with veterans service groups throughout the community to listen and learn how Community Hospice & Palliative Care can best serve our unique needs."

Bob Buehn, Captain, United States Navy (Ret.)
Chairman, Community Hospice Veterans Partnership
(2011 - present)





Salute Our Heroes in Their Final Days: Support Flags & Pins for Veterans in Hospice Care

Honor our local veterans in hospice care with a dignified tradition when you support funding for flags and pins through Community Hospice & Palliative Care.

Since 2008, the Jacksonville-based organization has presented all veterans admitted to its hospice program with a commemorative pin to honor their service, as well as a certificate of appreciation. For veterans who get care at one of our eight inpatient centers, staff and volunteers erect the flag of the service branch in which they served outside their rooms. Flags are then presented to veterans' families following the death.



The need for funding is great as up to 25 percent of patients who receive hospice care at Community Hospice & Palliative Care are veterans. The nonprofit organization, which provides hospice care to nearly 1,300 patients each day, raises funds through individual support and community organizations who believe in serving those who have served our country so honorably.

If you or your organization would like to support our Flags & Pins Initiative and honor our warriors one last time, please contact

Toula Wootan, director of community programs at Community Hospice & Palliative Care, at 904.407.6211 or twootan@communityhospice.com.

The Veterans Council of St. Johns County is proud to announce that it has modernized its website and created a Facebook page.



We are inviting all veterans to visit our website at:
NEW <http://www.veteranscouncilsjc.org>

The Veterans Council will post items of interest to all veterans, post pictures, articles, flyers, events, etc. We will post our meetings dates and keep you informed about events at the Jacksonville and St. Augustine National Cemeteries.

Please join our group on Facebook at:
<http://veteranscouncilsjc.org>

Please select **Join the Group** to become a member

Once you have joined the Veterans Council Facebook group you will be able to post your meetings, pictures, articles, fund raisers, etc. It will be your common site to go to and see what's happening.

The website and Facebook page were updated and created so that there would be a central place to list all veterans activities in NE FL.

You may have noticed the Veterans Council's new logo, it was created by Roy Havekost and his web design company PageAuthors. The VC strongly recommends that you contact Roy, 727-487-6252, if you or your vet group wants to create a website or Facebook page.

NEW INFO: Ride in comfort to your appointments at the VA Medical Center in Gainesville.



The van is provided by the Disabled Veterans Chapter 6, and leaves no later than 6AM from the new VA Clinic location at 195 Southpark Blvd. The corner of Southpark and Old Moultrie Road.

To schedule your seat please contact the VA Clinic at 904-823-2954 and ask for Veteran Van Scheduling.



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Email: keith.e.ham.ctr@mail.mil

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*Veterans Council of St. Johns County,
"Helping All Veterans"*

The Veterans Council of St. Johns County welcomes article submissions from all County Veterans & organizations. Articles should be of interest to all and veterans related. Submissions may be edited &/or shortened and used if space permits.

Send to: rothfeldm@gmail.com



The Veterans Council of St. Johns County, Inc. is a Not For Profit Florida Corporation.

Our formation date was July 4, 2001 in a proclamation issued by the St. Johns County Commissioners. It is composed of representatives of the various veterans' organizations within St. Johns County.

The Veteran's Council will work with city and county governments and other local organizations to achieve the mutual goal to provide a central agency to assist in the coordination and presentation of matters concerning veterans and veterans activities in St. Johns County.

The Veteran's Council will endeavor to precipitate, stimulate and assist various organizations as they perform patriotic events. One of the major purposes is the promotion and education of national patriotic matters.

The St. Johns County Veterans Council meets the last Thursday of the month at 7 pm.

The Veterans Council will meet at the St. Johns County Health & Human Services Building, 200 San Sebastian View Muscovy Room, 1st floor

**Veterans Service Office
200 San Sebastian View, Suite 1400
St. Augustine, FL 32084**

*(physical location)
The VSO Office is located in the St. Johns County Health and Human Services Building.*

The office is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily, Monday through Friday excluding holidays.

*Service is by appointment.
Phone: 904-209-6160 Fax: 904-209-6161
Joseph McDermott, SR VSO
Rick Rees, Assistant VSO
Travis Neidig, Assistant VSO*

The views expressed in The Patriot Reader Newsletter articles, submissions and spotlights are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Veterans Council of St. Johns County or the editors of The Patriot Reader. It is the purpose of this periodical to share a variety of information that pertain to local veterans and their organizations.